

Terrorist Financing Risks of Freedom Convoy

February 2022

Purpose

To provide background on the potential terrorist activity financing risks associated with the funding of the Freedom Convoy.

Background

The federal government mandate requiring all cross-border essential workers to be vaccinated, including truckers, came into effect on January 15, 2022. The Canadian Trucking Alliance estimates that at least 12,000 Canadian truckers, a mere 10 percent of all truckers, who cross the Canada-U.S. border remain unvaccinated. A cross-country convoy of anti-mandate truckers and supporters mobilized and gathered in Ottawa to protest the mandate beginning on January 28, 2022. A crowdfunding page that launched to financially support the protestors has, to date, raised almost \$10 million from approximately 120,000 donors. The campaign organizer, Tamara Lich, has said that the funds will be used cover the cost of fuel, food and accommodations for the truckers. Of note, Lich is the secretary and member of the Maverick Party, formerly known as 'Wexit Canada', a federal political party that supports Alberta separatism.

Although the protest is seeking to end federal mandates requiring vaccinations for truckers, open source reporting has noted the involvement of hundreds of personal vehicles joining the convoy, who seek to co-opt the movement for a broader objective of ending all COVID-19 related mandates. Similarly, media reports and Ottawa Police Services media briefing has also noted the involvement of other actors that have capitalized on the momentum of the convoy to promote their respective beliefs, namely those that espouse anti-authority and xenophobic sentiments, which fall under the Ideologically Motivate Violent Extremism (IMVE) spectrum.

Legislative Context: Terrorist Activity in the *Criminal Code*

Section 83.01(1)(b) of the *Criminal Code* defines terrorist activity as:

(b) an act or omission, in or outside Canada,

(i) that is committed

(A) in whole or in part for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause, and

(B) in whole or in part with the intention of intimidating the public, or a segment of the public, with regard to its security, including its economic security, or compelling a person, a government or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act, whether the public or the person, government or organization is inside or outside Canada, and

(ii) that intentionally

(A) causes death or serious bodily harm to a person by the use of violence,

(B) endangers a person's life,

(C) causes a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or any segment of the public,

(D) causes substantial property damage, whether to public or private property, if causing such damage is likely to result in the conduct or harm referred to in any of clauses (A) to (C), or

(E) causes serious interference with or serious disruption of an essential service, facility or system, whether public or private, other than as a result of advocacy, protest, dissent or stoppage of work that is not intended to result in the conduct or harm referred to in any of clauses (A) to (C).

Considering the definition provided for within the *Criminal Code*, it is important to consider that “terrorist activity” is not restricted to the commission of an actual attack. Rather, the reference to preparatory conduct, including **conspiracy, attempt or threat to commit such act** or omission, or **counselling** in relation to any such act or omission is included within the legal definition of terrorist activity. The threshold in this matter refers to notions, such as, “**attempted to carry out**” and “**facilitated**” a terrorist activity, “facilitating” a crime, means to make it easier to commit a crimeⁱ.

The below noted instances and activities that have occurred in Ottawa indicate the risk for the potential of violent extremist activity to escalate, which may or may not constitute terrorist activity in Canada.

Examining the Threat of Violence

The protest saw limited but concerning instances of violence, harassment, and vandalism in Ottawa. The following provides a brief overview of this activity:

Threats to Safety and Disruption to Public

The Canadian Association of Journalists stated that they were “concerned about threats of violence and harassment of reporters covering the truckers’ convoy. Journalists have been verbally harassed on camera, chased and sent racist death threats. At least one news vehicle was damaged”ⁱⁱ. In particular, journalists received death threatsⁱⁱⁱ, were spat on^{iv}, and were physically and verbally harassed by the protestors.

Essential services also experienced interference due to the convoy, with the operations commander for the Ottawa Paramedic Service stating that rocks were hurled at an ambulance and a paramedic was subject to racial slurs^v. Paramedics have since requested for police escorts^{vi}.

Additionally, public transit services have also been impacted. OC Transpo stated that while Para Transpo customers have been cut off from transit services due to congestion in the downtown core, that “OC Transpo is actively working with City and emergency personnel to best accommodate Para Transpo trips challenged by demonstrations”^{vii}.

Presence of Designated Terrorist Entities

A truck participating in the protests displayed the flag associated with Three Percenters^{viii}, a listed IMVE terrorist entity in Canada. Public Safety Canada has noted that “based on their actions, [Three Percenters] meets the legal threshold for listing as set out in the *Criminal Code*, which requires reasonable grounds to believe that an entity has knowingly carried out, attempted to carry out, participated in or facilitated a terrorist activity, or has knowingly acted on behalf of, at the direction of, or in association with such an entity”. Additionally, it was noted “listing can also assist in the investigation of terrorism offences that have “terrorist group” as an element of the offence, such as knowingly participating in any activity of a terrorist group for the purpose of enhancing its ability to facilitate or carry out a terrorist activity”^{ix}. Of note, it is not a crime to be a member of a listed entity in Canada.

Presence of Notable IMVE Actors

Notable prominent individuals organizing or otherwise associated with the convoy have explicitly called for violent activity during the protest or have a previous involvement with extremist organized groups in Canada.

One individual, Patrick King, is listed as a contact for North Alberta on Canada Unity's website, the organization largely credited for mobilizing the convoy, which has published a legalese "memorandum of understanding" that has garnered 240,000 signatures from supporters. King, while having been disavowed from the convoy by other organizers, is involved in the convoy and seen as a central figure nonetheless. In the past, he has espoused anti-Semitic and xenophobic sentiments, stating that unless Canadians change, they might have to change their names to "Ishmael" or "drop a bunch of change down the stairs" and "call yourself chong ching ching chang"^x. Additionally, he has repeated conspiracy theories associated with white supremacism and white nationalism^{xixi}. He has also spread misinformation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination^{xiii}.

Most concerning, King has said that "the only way that this [pandemic related public health measures] is going to be solved is with bullets"^{xiv}. As a result, the government's Sergeant-at-Arms "sent an email to all MPs advising them to avoid the rally and 'go somewhere safe'"^{xv}. In another video, King advised his followers to stage large gatherings in defiance of public health guidelines and stated that should they be reported by their neighbours, "those people need to be shot"^{xvi}.

Jason LaFace is also listed as an organizer by Canada Unity, and has been cited as the main organizer for Ontario. Notably, in photos shared on his personal social media pages, he has been wearing clothing with the initials S.O.O., believed to be associated with the group Soldiers of Odin, an anti-government group defunct and inactive in Canada^{xvii}, although it has previously raised concerns about the potential for "anti-immigrant vigilantism"^{xviii} and was labelled as having violent members in a CBSA report^{xix}.

Similarly, Dave Steenburg, another convoy leader, has been associated with Soldiers of Odin after sharing the group's logo on his social media, with a caption encouraging Canadians to stand up for their rights^{xx}. Steenburg has also shared conspiracy theories pertaining to vaccination, as well as posts "depicting war crime punishments for those who have legislated and enforced COVID-19 mandates"^{xxi}.

Media reporting has further linked the convoy movement to Canadian far-right groups, including members of accelerationist networks, such as the Diagonal network and the Plaid Army^{xxii}. The Diagonal network is an antigovernment movement that "wants to see the creation of a secession state that extends from the Canadian Prairies across the United States into Florida"^{xxiii}. Members of the Plaid Army stated, in a now-deleted video, that they hoped the convoy would turn into Canada's version of the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, and that "it would be bigger than the Oka and FLQ crises, both events that saw people killed"^{xxiv}.

Hate Symbols

Participants were observed waving flags with swastikas and Confederate flags near and on Parliament Hill^{xxv}, along with others performing the Nazi salute (seig heil)^{xxvi} whilst protesting. Furthermore, signs held by protestors included the Schutzstaffel symbols^{xxviii}. As well, some protestors openly self-identified as white supremacists^{xxix}.

Calls for Violence

Additionally, general calls for violence have been observed amongst participants, including the suggestion that the event should be Canada's "January 6th," referring to the insurrection on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Thus far, the protest at Parliament Hill has seen the desecration of the national War Memorial and the Terry Fox statue, as well as threatening, illegal, or intimidating behavior towards police or city workers and residents, and damage to city vehicles^{xxxxxi}.

Ottawa Police Service Chief Peter Sloly discussed the focus on de-escalation tactics being employed in response to the demonstration, which he maintained has been a successful approach, suggesting that

the concerted and sustained efforts of law enforcement to not escalate the protest is largely responsible for mitigating the threats of violence. He further mentioned that more intelligence warning Ottawa Police Service of the potential for violence is still coming in, in regards to local threats. As a result, Ottawa police is working with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, RCMP and other agencies to identify any potential threats to public safety. He has stated that monitoring "will continue and we will be as prepared as possible to identify those individuals or groups that may seek to come here physically to cause harm to the city, to disrupt lawful demonstrations, or that may be inciting hate and/or criminal violence online"^{xxxii}.

Nexus to Terrorist Financing

Since the launch of the crowdfunding page to financially support the convoy, nearly \$10 million have been raised, which the organizers have indicated will go towards covering the fuel, food, and accommodations for the truckers participating in the protest. Open-source research further indicates that donations have been solicited on social media pages to be directed towards personal banking accounts of organizers, such as Pat King, or towards email addresses associated with the convoy, considering a majority of the funds donated to the crowdfunding page have not yet been released.

Considering the risk for the potential of violent extremist activity to occur that may reasonably fall within the legal threshold of terrorist activity as defined in the *Criminal Code* in Canada, FINTRAC assess the critical necessity for research and analysis on the Freedom Rally and its crowdfunding efforts for the development of strategic financial intelligence from a terrorist financing perspective.

ⁱ Public Safety Canada, Canada's Criminal Code Terrorist Listing Regime.

ⁱⁱ [Newsroom leaders encouraged to protect safety of journalists covering truckers' convoy \(caj.ca\)](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Dale Manucdoc on Twitter: "These are texts the Toronto contact for the Truckers' convoy calling itself a Freedom Rally sent me. After calling CBC a virus, he goes on to call me a "slave blooded traitor" that will "swing" in time. All I asked for was an interview. #FreedomConvoyCanada #FreedomConvoy2022 https://t.co/3odGwqGBqr" / Twitter](#)

^{iv} [Frank Gunn on Twitter: "So nice to spend my birthday getting spat on, shoved an yelled at by the supporters of the antivax truck convoy. The wheels have come off for a small minority and I can't figure how they can be helped." / Twitter](#)

^v [Trucker convoy: Canadians 'shocked and disgusted' by some protesters' behaviour, Trudeau says | Ottawa Citizen](#)

^{vi} [Annie Bergeron-Oliver on Twitter: "Ottawa Paramedics say that due to safety concerns police are being asked to accompany paramedics on 911 calls downtown." / Twitter](#)

^{vii} [Trucker convoy: Police charge two Ottawa men following protest-related investigations; 'I'm here until the end' — demonstrators revel on fifth day | Ottawa Citizen](#)

^{viii} [FKcJdYwQAALKVW \(900x677\) \(twimg.com\)](#)

^{ix} [Government of Canada lists four new terrorist entities - Canada.ca](#)

^x <https://twitter.com/VestsCanada/status/1177995894408581120>

^{xi} <https://twitter.com/VestsCanada/status/1159997274900041729>

^{xii} <https://twitter.com/VestsCanada/status/1159997274900041729>

^{xiii} <https://www.facebook.com/therealpatking/videos/291725159441340/>

^{xiv} [Ottawa prepares for arrival of truck convoy at Parliament Hill | CP24.com](#)

^{xv} [Conservative MP Pictured With Ex-WEXIT Campaigner Who Suggested Fighting COVID-19 Restrictions "With Bullets" \(pressprogress.ca\)](#)

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- xvi [Conservative MP Pictured With Ex-WEXIT Campaigner Who Suggested Fighting COVID-19 Restrictions "With Bullets" \(pressprogress.ca\)](#)
- xvii [https://globalnews.ca/news/8543281/covid-trucker-convoy-organizers-hate/](#)
- xviii [https://globalnews.ca/news/3562798/far-right-soldiers-of-odin-members-not-afraid-to-use-violence-intelligence-report-warns/](#)
- xix ['Freedom Convoy' leader shared symbol of far-right hate group on TikTok | The Star](#)
- xx [https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2022/01/28/freedom-convoy-leader-shared-symbol-of-far-right-hate-group-on-tiktok.html](#)
- xxi [Anti-Vax Convoy Organizers Previously Targeted Striking Oil Refinery Workers in Alberta \(pressprogress.ca\)](#)
- xxii [The 'Freedom Convoy' Is Nothing But A Vehicle For The Far Right - Canadian Anti-Hate Network \(antihate.ca\)](#)
- xxiii ['Freedom Convoy' leader shared symbol of far-right hate group on TikTok | The Star](#)
- xxiv ['Freedom Convoy' leader shared symbol of far-right hate group on TikTok | The Star](#)
- xxv [https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FKVBW6nXsAlvc7O?format=jpg&name=small](#)
- xxvi [Swastikas displayed at Canadian 'Freedom Convoy' protests against vaccination mandates - Jewish Telegraphic Agency \(jta.org\)](#)
- xxvii [https://cdn.nationbuilderthemes.ca/antihate/tr:q-85,c-at_max,w-1650/pages/465/attachments/original/1643669506/sig_convoy.png?1643669506](#)
- xxviii [https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FKUp6K4XIAwIjzx?format=jpg&name=small](#)
- xxix [Andrea Gunn on Twitter: "On the livestream just a few minutes ago. I bet she didn't expect to find anyone who identifies as a white supremacist so readily. He's even met with a few cheers. Whether or not there is a "minority" of voices parading around extreme views, ask yourself why they feel safe here. https://t.co/JfngNfRZ5n" / Twitter](#)
- xxx [https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-truck-freedom-convoy-ottawa-live-update/](#)
- xxxi [Ottawa Police on Twitter: "Several criminal investigations are underway in relation to the desecration of the National War Memorial/Terry Fox statue, threatening/illegal/intimidating behaviour to police/city workers and other individuals and damage to a city vehicle. 1/2" / Twitter](#)
- xxxii [For organizers, Ottawa protest is about much more than just ending trucker vaccine mandate | National Post](#)